

Section 3

Accreditation Standards

There are two categories of accreditation standards for institutions that prepare professional educators in California. An accredited institution is expected to satisfy the standards in both categories.

Category I. Common Standards relate to aspects of program quality that are the same for all educator preparation programs. This category includes standards regarding the overall leadership and climate for educator preparation at an institution, as well as standards pertaining to quality features that are common to all programs such as resources, coordination, admissions and advisement. An institution responds to each Common Standard by providing pertinent information, including information about individual programs. The Common Standards are in Appendix 2 of this *Framework*.

Category II. Program Standards address the quality of program features that are specific to a credential, such as curriculum, field experiences, and knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by candidates in the specific credential area. When institutions prepare for continuing accreditation reviews, they may consider the following options for program-specific standards. Different options may be exercised by different credential programs at an institution. Options that are selected will be the basis for the review of specific programs by accreditation teams, and will guide the selection and orientation of team members. Pertaining to each program, the institution responds to each standard in the selected option by providing program-specific information for review by the accreditation team.

- **Option 1. California Program Standards.** The Commission continues to rely on panels of experts from colleges, universities and schools to develop standards for specific credential programs. These panels are guided by current research findings in the field of the credential. They also consider standards developed by appropriate national and statewide professional organizations. If the national or professional standards are found to be appropriate for California, a panel may recommend that the Commission adopt them in lieu of developing new standards or revising the Commission's existing standards. After reviewing the recommendations of advisory panels and other experts, the Commission adopts California Program Standards for the initial and continuing accreditation of credential preparation programs. The Commission may require that a new set of California Program Standards be met by each institution that prepares candidates for a credential.
- **Option 2. National or Professional Program Standards.** California institutions may propose program standards that have been developed by national or state professional organizations. Such a proposal may be submitted to the Committee on Accreditation with a statement of the institution's reasons for selecting this option and recommending the proposed standards. If the Committee determines that the recommended standards, taken as a whole, provide a level of professional quality comparable to the standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards), the Committee approves the proposed standards for use as Program Standards in the initial or continuing accreditation of credential programs.

- **Option 3. Experimental or Alternative Program Standards.** For initial accreditation, an institution may present a program that meets the Experimental Program Standards adopted by the Commission pursuant to Education Code Section 44273 or an institution may develop Alternative Standards for initial and continuing accreditation of a credential program. If the Committee on Accreditation determines that the proposed standards, taken as a whole, provide a level of program quality comparable to the standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards), the Committee approves the Alternative Standards for use as Program Standards by the institution that proposed them. Experimental programs are designed to examine professional issues or policy questions related to the preparation of credential candidates. For continuing accreditation, institutions that sponsor experimental programs are required to report their findings to the Commission, which disseminates the results to other institutions in California. A program that is subsequently accredited on the basis of Alternative Program Standards may legally depart from several statutory requirements that govern teacher education programs.